

Editorials by Samuel Gompers

IN

THE AMERICAN FEDERATIONIST

(From March and April, 1905, Issues.)

THE TRADE UNIONS TO BE SMASHED AGAIN

No. 1

The socialists have called another convention to smash the American trade union movement. This is the sixth "concentrated" effort in this direction in the past decade. In 1894, after the American Railway Union furore and fiasco, a congress was called at Chicago to change the name of that organization to the American Labor Union and to extend its "sphere of influence" to all labor, with a patent scheme of land colonization.

In 1895 the socialist political party called into being the great trade union demolisher, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. Then, in order, came the St. Louis congress of socialist trade union "busters," at which a non-union socialist, without so much as a credential, declared he represented two million "unorganized picks."

Following this was ushered in the Western Federation of Labor, which, to manifest its ideal of the world-wide brotherhood of man, launched that movement to be confined to the West alone.

And yet another congress, in which the Western Federation of Labor became the American Labor Union.

And now the American Labor Union, confessing its insufficiency and failure, joins with a number of other socialists in a call for another congress to again annihilate the American trade union movement.

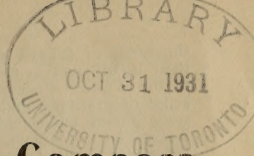
Scanning the list of the twenty-six signers of this call, one will look in vain to find the name of one man who has not for years been engaged in the delectable work of trying to divert, pervert, and disrupt the labor movement of the country. Here's the list; look it over and judge for yourself:

W. J. Pinkerton, A. M. Simons, Thomas J. Hagerty, Wm. E. Trautmann, Charles H. Moyer, Geo. Estes, William D. Haywood, W. Shurtleff, M. E. White, Thos. J. De Young, C. O. Sherman, Fred D. Henion, Mother Jones, Frank M. McCabe, John M. O'Neill, Frank Bohn, Daniel McDonald, John Guild, Jos. Schmitt, W. L. Hall, Ernest Untermann, W. J. Bradley, Frank Krafft, A. J. Swing, J. E. Fitzgerald, Clarence Smith.

Conscious of the frequency with which Mr. Eugene V. Debs has periodically inaugurated a new movement, we were somewhat surprised to notice that his name was conspicuous by its absence from the call, but "Comrade" Trautmann explained later in a newspaper item that "Comrade Debs was unable to sign the document owing to nervous prostration." Of course, some physical disability was the only cause for the absence of Mr. Debs' name from the call, for surely another of his new movements was due about this time. Even up to the time when Mr. Debs was a socialist candidate for President he was a democratic politician and stump orator.

We feel sure that the endorsement and the latest accession to this new movement of Mr. Daniel Loeb alias DeLeon, will bring unction to the souls of these promoters of the latest trade union smashing scheme. So the socialist trade union smashers and rammers from without, and the borers from within, are again joining hands; a pleasant sight of the "Pirates" and the "Kangaroos" hugging each other in glee over their prospective prey.

It may not be uninteresting to note that President Moyer and Secretary Haywood, of the Western Federation of Miners, have joined the coterie in the call for this new effort to destroy the labor movement. Mark well, the Western Federation of Miners, toward whose assistance the members and unions of the American Federation of Labor contributed thousands upon



act. d.

thousands of dollars, and are yet contributing, as a result of our appeal in their behalf, and in response to appeals and visits from the representatives of the Western Federation of Miners now being made, are exhibiting their sense of gratitude and principles of unionism in the effort to disrupt the trade union movement. Aye, even the official journal of the Western Federation of Miners, in publishing the American Federation of Labor's appeal for financial assistance, unconsciously paid our movement a tribute by publishing our indictment of Colorado conditions and appeal for financial assistance under the following head: "The American Federation of Labor to the Rescue."

We do not believe that either Mr. Moyer or Mr. Haywood represents in this their latest acts either the wishes or purposes of the rank and file of the Western Federation of Miners. As a matter of fact, the disruptive tactics to which they have given their names and their services have been pursued without consulting the wishes or obtaining the consent of the membership either at a convention or by referendum.

Of course, we are aware that some socialists have declared that this latest effort is wrongful, but the protest of most of these is half-hearted and, upon the face, insincere.

The last socialist congress held in Chicago, 1904, reaffirmed the declaration of the socialist congresses held in Brussels, Zurich, and London, in effect that "the trade and labor unions are a necessity in the struggle to aid in emancipating the working classes, and we consider it the duty of all wage workers to join with this movement," and further declared that "Neither political nor any other differences of opinion, justify the division of the forces of labor in the industrial movement."

These declarations were solemnly made, even by those who now sign the call in direct conflict with their own political party declarations. The inference is logical that the declaration was made for a purpose, and that purpose was the vote-getting of the trade unionists, and that after it had served its purpose, the declaration was tossed into the waste-paper basket to be gathered together at some future time for repetition for the same purpose. In the mean time each socialist may run amuck or join a band having in view nothing but destruction of labor's interests.

The more open and aggressive of the political socialists recognize this time as good as any when they may make a move to renew the effort to crush the American labor movement. The citizens' alliances and the Parryites may be counted upon to be their willing allies and accomplices.

And so far as the trade union movement is concerned, it might as well have to face all its enemies, open or secret, at one and the same time. In any event, it is far better that all of them come out in the open so that we may all know whom we have to overcome. That they will be confronted and overcome is as sure as it is said, "God made little apples," and someone else has made little socialists who launch bubbles which are filled with the exuberance of their verbosity and which explode from the flatulency of their enormous gas.

THE TRADE UNIONS TO BE SMASHED AGAIN

No. 2

The latest "concentrated" effort of the socialists to destroy the trade union movement is inaugurated under the pretext that the American Federation of Labor refuses to recognize the changes which are constantly taking place in industry. That it is a pretext inexcusably ignorant and maliciously false, any observer must know. It is designed for the single object of hiding the real purpose—that is, of trying to divide and disrupt and destroy the trade union movement, which has done and is doing so much to protect and advance the interests of the working people of America.

Let us see the position which the American Federation of Labor takes upon the question of trade union and the so-called industrial organization. The most definite declaration by the American Federation of Labor upon that subject was at the Scranton convention.

It emphasized the impossibility of establishing hard and fast lines by which all trade unions can govern themselves; it declared that the permanency of the trade union movement depends upon the recognition and advocacy of the principle of autonomy consistent with the varying phases and transitions in industry; that the interests of labor are best promoted by the subdivided

crafts being closely allied and efforts made to amalgamate them, as well as the organization of district and national trade councils for the common concert of action within "allied" craft organizations.

This declaration was no new departure for the American Federation of Labor; it was simply the assertion of the true trade union attitude which recognizes the historic and natural development of the labor movement; that is, the movement of the wage earners, discontented with their existing wrongs and determined to right them.

It is the crystalized, associated conscious effort to prepare for and meet new conditions as they arise and deal with them practically and effectively. That is the policy, the law of growth and development of the intelligent and progressive trade union movement as understood, advocated, and practiced by the American Federation of Labor.

The promoters of the disruptive effort claim to be industrialists; that is, they pretend to favor organization of all those engaged in a given industry into one union without regard to the trades to which the various workmen belong. Let us examine, for a moment, how inconsistent are their declarations with their practice. The American Federation of Labor recognized and conceded to the Boot and Shoe Workers' International Union jurisdiction over all branches of the boot and shoe trade. In Lynn, Mass., a number of workmen are employed in the making of "counters," a branch of the shoe trade. They organized, applied to the American Federation of Labor for a charter, which was refused. They were advised to join the "industrial" union of the trade—the Boot and Shoe Workers' International Union. This they, the counter-makers, declined to do, and they made application to the American Labor Union for a charter, which was promptly issued and boastfully proclaimed.

The American District of Amalgamated Engineers were claimed by the International Association of Machinists. The American Federation of Labor made every effort to bring about the amalgamation. The refusal of the engineers to comply and their unfraternal conduct toward the machinists' union during several strikes resulted in the American Federation of Labor revoking the engineers' charter. They promptly applied to the American Labor Union for a charter, which issued one without inquiry or hesitation, and a member of the engineers was swiftly made an American Labor Union organizer.

The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees made application to the American Federation of Labor for a charter, and notwithstanding that several of the most powerful brotherhoods of railway employes were unaffiliated to the American Federation of Labor, the application was denied for several reasons; one, that the so-called United Brotherhood of Railway Employees was disruptive of the organizations of steam railway men which have done so much for their fellow workmen; second, that a federation or amalgamation of the railway organizations was a matter for time to develop; third, because the interests of the railway men would be injured, and fourth, because there was a strong conviction, the accuracy of which was subsequently demonstrated, that the principal advocates of that association were not honest, and that they were in the service of hostile railway companies to injure the interests of the railway workmen. Yet this so-called "industrial" organization, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, is not only chartered, but is a supposed potent factor in the American Labor Union. And so on and so on. We might cite instances, not only of inconsistencies, but of perfidy to labor, which have marked the history and the practice of the American Labor Union, the organization instituted, officered, and managed by socialists; the organization that now with other socialists has called a congress to attempt to destroy the American Federation of Labor and the trade union movement of our country.

Of course, some may disclaim the intention to disrupt the labor movement, but as the days pass the promoters of the "new movement" give vent to what they really have in mind. One of them, "Comrade" White, of Denver, at a recent meeting in that city, in explanation gave this illustration of their purpose. He says:

"We shall organize, for instance, all men employed in any way in iron works, such as molders, car workers, structural iron workers, and the like."

No doubt "the like" will cover such trades as the machinists and the iron and steel workers. We presume that the Iron Molders' Union of North America, the Bridge and Structural Iron Workers of America, the Brotherhood of Car Workers, the International Association of Machinists, and other

trade unions which have increased wages, shortened hours of labor, and made conditions such that life was worth the living, are to be swept aside or crushed, and the men are expected to take kindly to the will-o'-the-wisp that would surely lead them into the swamp of misery and degradation. And as will be observed, socialist "Comrade" White quotes the iron, steel, molding, and construction simply as an illustration to be applied to all other trades and callings.

It is not uninteresting to note that at the same meeting another socialist "comrade," Miss Twining, denounced the trade union movement and the union shop in the same language that Parry and other representatives of the Citizens' Alliance employ. She declared that "the closed shop is a monopoly, the same as the Standard Oil Company."

In other words, then, the advocates of this "new movement" are the handmaids of labor's enemies and stand for the so-called "open" or non-union shop.

It may not be amiss to remark that Secretary Haywood, of the Western Federation of Miners, has issued a circular letter to the editors of the labor press of the country asking for the lists of the names and addresses of subscribers, saying they are to be used to send copies of the circular call for this congress—the congress aimed to destroy the trade union movement. Apart from the perfidy of purpose and the supreme gall in making the request, it is well to bear in mind that a few months ago the Western Federation of Miners frantically appealed to all trade unionists for financial assistance. The American Federation of Labor issued an appeal in their behalf. Thousands upon thousands of dollars were contributed by the American Federation of Labor unions and accepted by the Western Federation of Miners. They are still appealing for and receiving the moneys of our unions.

The expense involved in printing, addressing, and postage on the circular Secretary Haywood contemplates sending to all the labor press subscribers, would amount to several thousand dollars. How about this sudden affluence? From whence does it come? Is the money received from the American trade unionists and contributed for the defense of Colorado's workmen's rights now being used in the effort to disrupt the trade union movement?

The American Federation of Labor was called into being in 1881 out of the fragmentary, disconnected organizations of the day. It has had a continuous growth from that day to this. Its work and its history have been the organizing of thousands upon thousands of unions. It has united and federated them until the spirit of fraternity and solidarity is recognized among the toilers and thinkers of the world. It has become a potent force in the affairs of our time. It is both feared and respected. It has deserved and earned the confidence and good will of the wage-earners and the people generally. It is the first general labor movement that has existed in America for any considerable period of time, and, more than all other factors combined, it has made the world of workers regard each other as brothers in the common cause for justice and right.

This great work, these great achievements, the splendid future and possibilities, are sought to be destroyed by men who mask as the friends of labor, but who, indeed, would aim to accomplish what the greatest combination of capitalistic enemies could not achieve. Combinations of antagonistic employers can neither divide nor destroy the labor movement in open conflict, no matter how bitter or relentless the war they wage, but they may buy or suborn the wicked, and the ignorant may be fooled in assisting to create division in the ranks and thus diffuse efforts, inaugurate rivalry and antagonism, and injure the interests of all.

It has always been the policy of tyrants, whether in government or industry, to bring about division in the ranks of the masses. It has been the hope, the prayer, and the work of those sincerely devoted to the cause of labor to strive for unity, realizing that even though the progress may not be so fast as some impatient spirits would have it, yet that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. To strengthen that link so that the tensile power may be increased to the advantage of all, is the purpose. Applying this principle, the American Federation of Labor strives to gather within the fold, day by day, more of the unorganized; to constantly achieve improvement and advancement; to preach, aye, not only to preach, but to practice and inculcate the practice of, unity, fraternity, and solidarity of labor.